DOCUMENT RESUME

UD 017 280

ED 143 723

TITLE	School Disruptions: Tips for Educators and Police.
INSTITUTION	Department of Justice, Washington, D.C. Community Relations Service.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	[77]
NOTE	28p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Check Lists; *Guidelines; *Needs Assessment; *Police Action; *Police School Relationship; *School Role; Social Action

ABSTRACT

This brief pamphlet cutlines a minimum number of basic steps school and police officials should take in developing a joint approach to problems of school disruption. It is also designed to be used as a checklist in preparing a memorandum of agreement relating to school disruption. The pamphlet has two sections: preventing disruptions and responding to disruptions. After a few introductory remarks, each section is divided into two parts: what the school should do and what the police should do. The first section deals with three topics: conducting a needs assessment, developing joint preventive measures, and planning for a disruption. The second section deals with three topics: using school and community resources, requesting police intervention, and managing police intervention. (Author/AM)

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AUG 15 1977

SCHOOL DISRUPTIONS:

TIPS FOR EDUCATORS AND POLICE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Findings of a Conference
Sponsored by

Community Relations Service
U.S. Department of Justice

Law Enforcement Assistance Administration
U.S. Department of Justice

National Institute of Education
U.S. Department of Health, Education
and Welfare

This project resulted from a conference sponsored by the Community Relations Service and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration of the U.S. Department of Justice. The conference and this brochure were supported by a grant from the National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the participants, coordinator, and consultants, and do not necessarily represent the official position or policy of the sponsoring agencies.

HOW TO USE THIS BROCHURE

This brochure has two sections: Preventing Disruptions and Responding to Disruptions. After a few introductory remarks, each section is divided into two parts: What the Schools Should Do and What the Police Should Do. For your convenience, these parts are color keyed.

The brochure outlines a minimum number of basic steps school and police officials should take in developing a joint approach to problems of school disruption. It may also be used as a resource book of checklists in preparing a memorandum of agreement relating to school disruption.

INTRODUCTION

As public-sanctioned school and police officials, you share an awesome responsibility for preventing — as well as dealing with — possible school disruption. This brochure was designed with your particular needs in mind.

In recent years, more and more school systems have experienced serious problems, both in and outside the classroom. And it seems the nature of this school conflict continues to grow more complicated with each new case that arises.

Concern over this rapid rise in school-centered disruption, along with an increasing awareness among officials that a coordinated police/school response is needed, prompted CRS and LEAA to sponsor a two-day action conference at the Massachusetts State Police Academy. The conference, attended by many of New England's top school and police officials, consisted of a series of police/school response workshops.

The goals of these workshops were: (1) to learn about present relationships existing between the schools and police departments from the collective experience of the participants; and (2) to distill basic materials and guidelines which could be used nationally to help administrators work more cooperatively in preventing or peacefully settling school disruptions.

While only New England school and police people attended the conference, the task force which prepared this brochure believes that the suggestions provided here will be useful throughout the United States.

PREVENTING DISRUPTIONS

Preventing disruption is the responsibility of both school and police officials: YOU!

While school authorities bear the most immediate responsibility for identifying potential in-school problems, only through cooperative planning and communication efforts can all the conditions that breed school disruption be analyzed.

This cooperative effort should reflect one clear purpose: keeping the process of education going. This must remain the primary purpose, even when inflammatory conditions prevail.

Too often, officials facing school problems feel there is nothing they can immediately do to resolve the situation. In many cases, school closings are ordered unnecessarily — when good planning would have kept them open.

Effective planning begins with a realistic assessment of your needs. You must be prepared to deal with more than just the school's narrowly defined security problems. Community concerns and issues also affect the school's situation.

Needs assessment is a two-way street. Both the schools and police must conduct studies and share their results. After these initial steps are completed, a better understanding of what the real problems are and who should take the necessary action under specific circumstances will result.

On the following pages are common elements for developing a joint approach to preventing disruption. This section has three parts: Conducting a Needs Assessment, Developing Joint Preventive Measures, and Planning for a Disruption.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

Collect Data:

- ☐ Conduct special surveys: examine faculty staffing patterns, review school policies, etc.
- ☐ Review school security incident reports.
- ☐ Evaluate curriculum and social issues affecting the student body: review student involvement in developing policies and programs; examine student opportunities for participating in activities; etc.
- ☐ Share security information with police. If a school security program exists, it should provide the principal liaison with police.

Identify Problems:

- ☐ What are your most serious problems? Have the real causes been identified or addressed?
- ☐ Of these serious problems, which demand your immediate attention?
- ☐ Are the problems school-centered, community-centered, or of some distinctive combination?

Identify Needs and Set Goals:

- ☐ Request police opinion of what your needs are to prevent disruption.
- ☐ Based on available data, determine needs and set goals.
- ☐ Put goals into priorities.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

Collect Data:

- ☐ Analyze school-related crime information.
- ☐ Review police/school incident reports.
- ☐ Analyze school/community problems and incidents which may spark disruption.
- ☐ Make appropriate case and intelligence information available to school authorities.

Identify Problems:

- ☐ What problems are likely to require immediate police response? What liaison with school is needed?
- ☐ What problems require police participation in long-range solutions?
- ☐ What is the proper police role in dealing with school-centered and community-centered problems which may lead to school disruption?

Identify Needs and Set Goals:

- ☐ Request school opinion of what you should do to help them prevent disruption.
- ☐ Based on available data, determine needs and set goals.
- ☐ Put goals into priorities.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

Develop and Implement Solutions to Meet Goals:

- ☐ Do you have adequate resources within the school?
- ☐ Are you making full use of community resources, has a community advisory council been established?
- ☐ Have timetables been established for solutions?
- ☐ Have responsibility and authority for developing solutions been clearly defined or delegated?
- ☐ Have responsibility and authority for school police cooperation been defined and accepted within the administration and between the police and the administration?

Re-evaluation:

- ☐ Re-evaluate problems and goals after an appropriate period of time.
- ☐ Modify existing solutions if necessary.
- ☐ Develop new solutions if appropriate.

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

Develop and Implement Solutions to Meet Goals:

- ☐ What police resources are available for use on school problems?
- ☐ What police resources are appropriate for use on school problems?
- ☐ What special demands on police manpower and budgeting will cooperation with schools create?

(How can these demands be met?)

- ☐ Have timetables been established to guide a joint police-school effort?
- ☐ Have responsibility and authority for police-school cooperation been defined and accepted within the department and between the school and the department?

Re-evaluation:

- ☐ Re-evaluate problems and goals after an appropriate period of time.
- ☐ Modify existing solutions if necessary.
- ☐ Develop new solutions if appropriate.

DEVELOPING JOINT

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

- ☐ Assure that your preventive measures reflect your real needs. Are you addressing the problems or the symptoms?
- ☐ Develop a fair code of discipline and a Student Bill of Rights. Involve students, parents, and staff in the development process.
- ☐ Develop a realistic grievance procedure. Again, involve students, parents, and staff in the development process.
- ☐ Review staffing patterns so that they reflect the community and student body.
- ☐ Review your curriculum to see that it reflects not only educational standards, but also community, ethnic, and student concerns.
- ☐ Assure yourself that the staff of the security unit, should one exist, is capable of recognizing potential problems and is able to deal with students without causing undue antagonism.
- ☐ Develop open lines of communication with the police and community groups. If a school security office exists, it should take the lead in police relations. However, final responsibility always rests with the school system superintendent.
- ☐ Consider the creation of a school security unit for defined needs and purposes if your school has no internal security team.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

- ☐ Assure that preventive measures reflect your real needs. Are you addressing the problems or the symptoms?
- ☐ Develop a School Liaison Resource Officer Program in schools where no security unit exists. The head of this program should be actively involved in teaching and curriculum development, as well as student counseling.
- ☐ Use officer assignments to develop rapport with students. Consult with school officials to use police experts as panelists and speakers in school seminars.
- ☐ Key patrol patterns to critical times and locations relating to schools.
- ☐ Develop formal policies and processes for supporting school security.
- ☐ Develop open lines of communication with schools and community groups.
- ☐ Clarify legal issues relating to police participation in normal school processes.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

☐ Identify potential problem sites.

Internal: exits, restrooms, gyms, cafeteria, shops, boiler rooms, etc.

External: bus zones, commons, parking areas, adjacent property, athletic grounds, etc.

☐ List available resource people who could quickly respond to the above sites.

Include: school security, teaching and non-teaching staff, traditional and non-traditional student leadership, parents, community, and police.

☐ Specify tasks for each resource person and develop a communication network to the central command post.

- Clearly define chain of command for both school and police officials.
- Initiate a program of presenting critical information to school and police officials.

☐ Other considerations:

- Provide separate and joint in-service training to police and school personnel on skills and techniques for dealing with school disruption.
- Give school staff clear operational instructions.
- Establish a signal system for announcing an emergency and its termination.

A DISRUPTION

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

☐ Identify potential problem sites and times.

- Sites: bus routes, transfer points, youth hang-outs, parking lots, etc.
- Times: beginning of school, lunch-time, end of classes.

☐ Outline available police resource.

- Establish patrol patterns to coincide with problem sites and times.
- Plan for traffic and crowd control.
- Clearly define chain of command for police and school people.
- Notify back-up and neighboring police stations/departments of your location and situation.
- Initiate a program of presenting critical information to police and school officials.

☐ Other considerations:

- Develop a plan for phased intervention and withdrawal.
- Identify a school liaison officer or assign a school resource officer.
- Establish a coordinated press relations policy with the school.
- Familiarize liaison personnel with school command post and, if possible, rehearse procedures for handling emergency tactical problems.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

☐ Other considerations (cont.):

- Have an emergency list of telephone numbers available.
- Establish a central command post.
- Develop a way of assisting injured people.
- Develop a method of isolating and removing disruptive students from school premises.
- Develop ways of communicating quickly with parents and community groups.
- Establish a written reporting process to be used in disruptive situations.
- Develop a coordinated press relations policy in cooperation with police.
- Advise police of any special problem for schools created by the police plan.

☐ Review, update, and reissue school/police plan. Develop a procedure requiring annual review and update of all the foregoing. Reissue revised plans to all involved personnel.

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

☐ Other considerations (cont.)

- Provide separate and joint in-service training to police and school personnel on skills and techniques for dealing with school disruption.

☐ Review, update, and reissue school/police plan. Develop a procedure requiring annual review and update of all the foregoing. Reissue revised plans to all involved personnel.

RESPONDING TO DISRUPTION

Prevention may fail. Disruption may occur. In that event your first responsibility is to protect life and return to a normal educational setting as soon as possible. This responsibility is equally shared by both the police and schools.

The best way to assure an orderly, effective response to disruption is through cooperative pre-planning. Police and school people are dependent upon each other in this process. Each should know what to expect from the other.

You can best establish this positive relationship by designing a contingency plan spelled out in a memorandum of agreement or understanding. There should be no surprises when you respond to a disruption.

Whether or not such formal arrangements exist, there are certain minimum steps that must be considered when you respond to school disruption. The following pages outline these steps.

This section has three parts: Using School and Community Resources; Requesting Police Intervention; and Managing Police Intervention.

USING SCHOOL AND

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

☐ Respond to a disruption according to its level of intensity. Generally, there are three levels:

- Level 1 — When disruption is confined to one area and there is no threat to students or staff.

  You are better off dealing with this yourself. Avoid the implications that may arise with the massive use of outside resources.

  If you have a school security program, involve it immediately. If necessary, bring in supplementary school professionals to help stabilize the school and manage the short-term overload of demands on school administration.

  The overall policy in these situations should be containment and removal, with minimum interruption of educational processes.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

☐ Respond to disruption according to its level of intensity. Generally, there are three levels:

- Level 1 — When disruption is confined to one area and there is no threat to students and staff.

  In these situations, the immediate police commander should be thoroughly briefed on what is happening. Where a school security program exists, the best liaison is usually between the police intelligence unit and a designated school security officer.

  You should design appropriate internal alert procedures to deal with the crisis if it intensifies.

  The overall policy in these situations is containment and removal, with minimum interruption of educational processes.

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

- Level 2 — When disruptive forces are mobile and/or pose a direct threat to members of the school community.

  If you have school security officers with appropriate legal status, they should apprehend disruptees and end disruption. In the absence of such security officers, you should request police assistance to control and remove.

  If necessary, bring in supplementary school professionals to help manage school administration during the difficulties. Also bring in selected community representatives to assist in the stabilization effort.

  Finally, activate your school's community advisory council if one exists.

  Above all, keep the school open.

- Level 3 — When disruption is general, educational processes have ended for most students, and there are serious threats to students and staff. In short, the situation is out of control.

  You should immediately request police assistance according to pre-existing plans. Generally, the school should be closed. Insofar as legal violations must be suppressed, authority to end disruption should shift from the school administrator to the police officer in charge.

  However, responsibility for the school should remain in the hands of the school administrator. You should cooperate with the police in a phased plan for restoring normal school operations.

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

- Level 2 — When disruptive forces are mobile and/or pose a direct threat to members of the school community.

  Institute a level 2 alert for the school. You should prepare a designated response unit to assist the school if necessary.

  If assistance is requested, you should respond with the minimum number of police required.

  In collaboration with school authorities, apprehend disruptees and assist school people in filing appropriate charges.

  Get out of the school as soon as possible.

- Level 3 — When disruption is general, educational processes have ended for most students, and there are serious threats to students and staff. In short, the situation is out of control.

  You should institute a level 3 alert for the school and respond according to plans for dealing with a major disruption.

  Apprehend disruptees, end disruption, and remain at the school as long as needed to provide deterrence and security.

  Return all normal security functions to school personnel as quickly as possible.

REQUESTING POLICE

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

☐ Who calls the police?

- Only one or two individuals in the school should have this authority. If a school security office exists, its director and the school principal should be the only authorized callers.
- Provide a "call back" number so that the police can verify the call as legitimate.

☐ Who will be in charge?

- The principal or his authorized designee remain in charge of school premises and personnel.
- The police will have primary responsibility for the enforcement of the law and will insist on making the final decision on all matters involving their sworn obligations. (School officials retain a responsibility to support the police as appropriate.)

INTERVENTION

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

☐ To whom do you respond?

- Identify one place, person, or office to receive official calls from the schools.
- Only respond to previously identified individuals.
- Verify the call as legitimate via the "call back" number.

☐ Who will be in charge?

- The senior officer on the scene is normally in charge of police.
- The officer in charge should immediately establish personal contact with the individual in charge of the school.

MANAGING POLICE

WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO

☐ Establish and maintain two-way communications; work together.

- Those in charge must know what their counterparts in the police department are doing and why.

☐ Response should be controlled and pre-defined.

- There should be a phased sequence of actions following the written memorandum of agreement.

☐ Assure that levels of police response are dictated by the level of school disruption.

- As the school's top official, you must determine the seriousness of the school's problem with input from police officials. You must also insure that the schools are prepared to assist and provide input to the police in each level.

☐ Provide police withdrawal assistance.

- When to withdraw requires the cooperative agreement of both police and school officials.
- There may be pressures to leave the police in too long or take them out too soon.

INTERVENTION

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

☐ Establish and maintain two-way communications, work together.

- Those in charge must know what their counterparts in the schools are doing and why.

☐ Response should be controlled and pre-defined.

- There should be a phased sequence of actions following the written memorandum of agreement.

☐ Levels of police response should be dictated by the level of school disruption.

- With assistance and guidance from the police, the principal will determine the seriousness of the school's problem.

☐ Phases of police response:

- Police are requested.
- Police verify request and assess situation.
- Determination of appropriate amount of force and necessary time elements.
- If necessary, first police squads are dispatched.
- Main force arrives at staging area.
- Supportive units arrive on site.
- Intervention by force if necessary.

  Police should be prepared to withdraw at any time if further intervention is unnecessary.

WHAT POLICE SHOULD DO

☐ Assure timely police withdrawal.

- When to withdraw requires careful judgment made cooperatively by both police and school officials.
- There may be pressures to leave the police in too long or take them out too soon. However the decision is reached, withdrawal must be consistent with the safety of students and staff.
- The final decision to withdraw is the responsibility of the police officer in charge. He should consider at least the following:
  - Has the crisis peaked?
  - What is the school's estimate of the situation?
  - Is the disruption affecting the surrounding community?
  - What are the minimum force levels which may be needed to keep the school open?
  - In what condition are the police officers?
  - Are there other police forces involved? What is their condition?
  - Are police officers seriously needed elsewhere?

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